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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003866

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/15/2016

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SUBJECT: PM DISCUSSES KURDS, SECURITY WITH AMBASSADOR

REF: BAGHDAD 3693

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: In an October 10 meeting with the Ambassador, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki highlighted increasing tensions between Kurds and Sunni Arabs in Kirkuk and Mosul. The next Presidency Council will discuss UNSCR 1546 and the current security situation in Baghdad. Finally, he noted the need for MNF-I forces to protect medicines warehoused near Abu Ghraib, and commented on his efforts to develop a media strategy. END SUMMARY.

Tensions in Northern Cities Between Kurds and Sunni Arabs

12. (C) The Ambassador provided a summary of the Secretary's meetings in Erbil, noting the KRG agrees with

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the GOI on the basic principles of a hydrocarbon policy, but there are specific items which need to be addressed. The PM agreed that clarification would benefit both the Kurds and the GOI, but hesitated when asked about forming a committee to address the details. The PM said tensions between Kurds and Sunni Arabs are escalating in places such as Kirkuk and Mosul creating a "dangerous situation." The Minister of Defense, the PM said, has approached him claiming KRG actions have prevented military supplies from reaching Baghdad. The Minister of Education has also expressed frustration, according to the PM, claiming the KRG is trying to appoint teachers in Mosul and Kirkuk.

13. (C) The Ambassador noted that US Special Envoy for PKK affairs, General Ralston, is scheduled to return to Iraq October 16 for discussions with recently-named Iraqi envoy for PKK affairs, Sherwan al-Wai'li. The PM replied that he and al-Wai'li will be traveling to Turkey on October 15 for two days. The PM wondered if meetings between Ralston and GOI officials could be held in Turkey.

UNSCR 1546, Saba' Bour, Security and Reconciliation

14. (C) The Ambassador commented on the need to extend UNSCR 1546. The PM responded that he had asked Vice President Adel Abdul Mehdi to convene a Political Council meeting to discuss the current security situation and the UNSCR. The PM then commented that MNF-I had approached him to discuss a vehicle ban during the remaining nights of Ramadan. The security situation in Iraq is improving each week, the PM said, and a vehicle ban "would stop government work and send the wrong message." The security vacuum, he explained, has been created by gaps between MNF-I forces surrounding Baghdad. Increasing helicopter patrols will

improve the security situation the PM said, by identifying mortar and rocket attacks before they occur.

¶5. (C) The PM expressed concerns about the "thousands of people" living in tents in Saba' Bour (near Taji). These refugees have been forced to flee because of sectarian fighting, creating a humanitarian crisis. The Ambassador asked about progress towards reconciliation, referring specifically to the October 2 Ramadan Agreement (Ref A). The PM responded that the planned ceremony between Sunni and Shia political leaders has been delayed due to the October 9 assassination of Vice President Tareq al-Hashemi's brother. The PM shared that initial reports about the attack have revealed "disturbing information" without clearly identifying those responsible.

Opening Medical Clinics and Protecting Medical Warehouses

¶6. (C) The Ambassador commented about the need for medical clinics in areas MNF-I forces have cleared. The PM agreed and stated that the Ministry of Health needs assistance guarding several warehouses full of medicine in the Abu Ghraib area. He explained that the security situation there is preventing medical personnel from obtaining the stored medicine and distributing it to local clinics and hospitals.

Creating a Media Strategy and Defining Roles

¶7. (C) The Ambassador commended the PM's recent trip to visit a local school and asked whether other Ministers might plan similar outings. The PM replied that he is encouraging his Ministers on this point, citing the

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Minister of Oil's recent trip to Najaf as an example. The PM noted his efforts to coordinate a media strategy using Council of Ministers' spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh and the PM's media advisor Yassin Majeed. The PM agreed that al-Dabbagh has good ideas, but it is the media advisor's role to develop specific strategies. The PM admitted that dividing the work and defining their respective roles will be a challenge, but expressed hope the end results will be worth the effort.

KHALILZAD